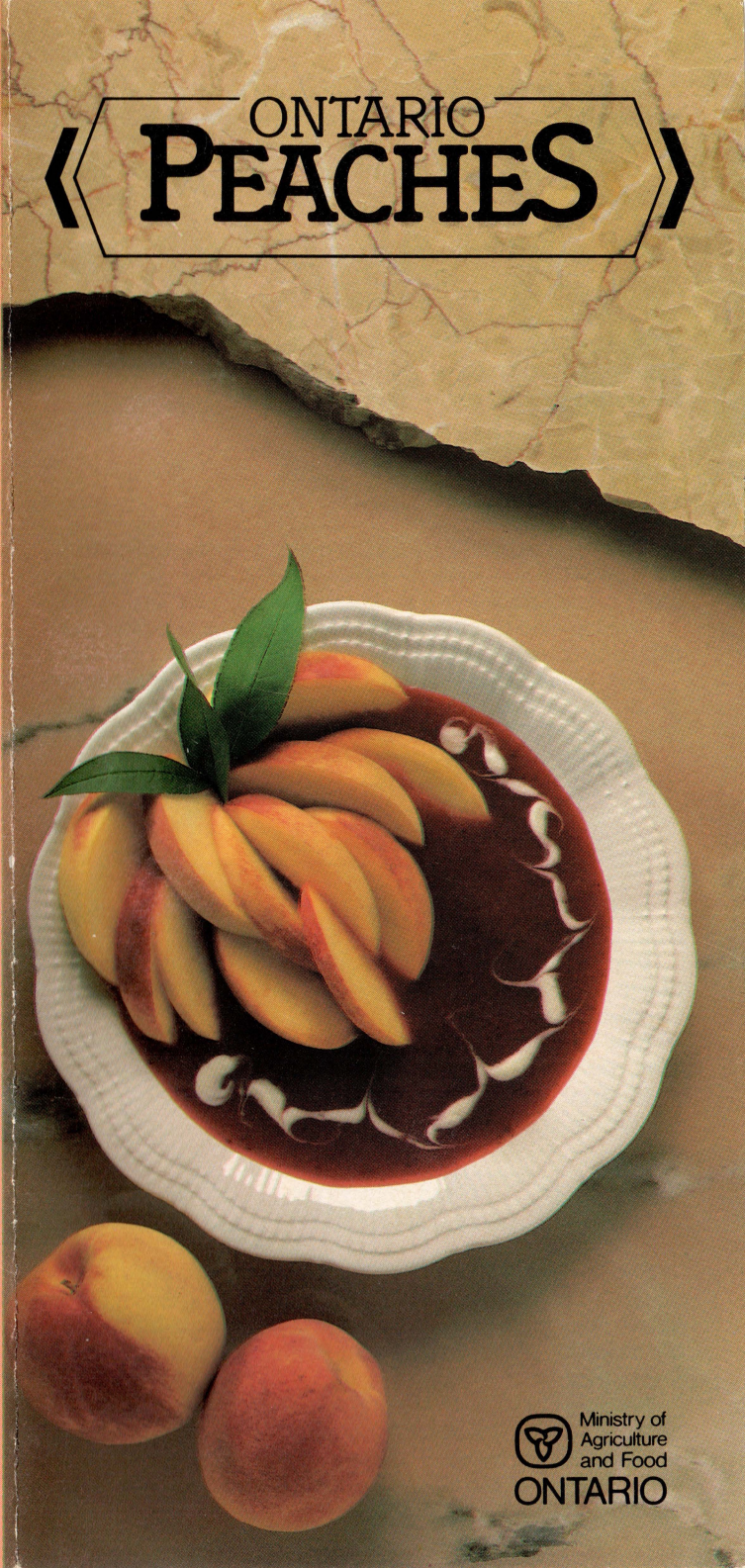
ONTARIO PEACHES



Ministry of Agriculture and Food
ONTARIO

Golden Ontario peaches – fruit of the summer sunshine, hand-picked to maintain their tender juicy goodness. Delight in the sweet, mellow flavour of an Ontario Peach on its own, blended into a culinary delight, or preserved for year-round enjoyment.

NUTRITION

Peaches fit in perfectly with today's healthy lifestyles. Cholesterol- and fat-free, they're an excellent source of vitamin A. Better still, one medium peach has only 35 calories.

SELECTION

What to look for: Fairly firm to touch; smooth, unwrinkled skin; sweet aroma; creamy yellow "background" colour (the blush or red colour is a sign of variety not ripeness).

What to avoid: Soft to touch; green colour around the stem end; tan-coloured circles.

How much to buy? Sold individually by the pound (kilogram); in 4 L and 6 qt baskets (approximately 6 lbs/2.5 kg and 10 lbs/4.5 kg respectively). Three to 4 medium peaches (1 lb/500 g) = 2 cups/500 mL sliced.

STORAGE

Sort and store peaches according to degree of ripeness; wash just before using.

Unripe Peaches (firm to the touch). Store at room temperature in single layer away from direct sunlight. Once ripened, store as ripe peaches.

Ripe Peaches (slightly soft to the touch). Store in single layer, uncovered in refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Overripe Peaches (very soft). Use immediately for eating or cooking.

VARIETIES

Semi-freestone peaches, as the name implies, are those to which the flesh partially clings to the pit. Candor, Earlired and Garnet Beauty are some of the more popular varieties. Available from the end of July to mid-August, they're perfect for fresh eating.

Freestone peaches, varieties whose flesh separates easily from the pit (i.e. Red Haven, Loring, Sun Haven and Vivid), are available from early August to late September. These versatile peaches can be used for fresh eating, canning, freezing and cooking.

'LIGHT' BRANDIED PEACH JAM

Morning time becomes special time with this elegant brandied peach preserve . . . and for only half the calories of regular freezer jam.

1/2 cup	chopped maraschino cherries	125 mL
3 tbsp	apricot or peach brandy	40 mL
3 1/2 cups	peeled, pitted, chopped, ripe Ontario Peaches (about 2 lb/1 kg)	875 mL
1/2 tsp	ascorbic acid crystals (optional)	2 mL
3 1/4 cups	granulated sugar	800 mL
1	pkg (49 g) "light" fruit pectin crystals	1

Combine maraschino cherries and brandy in large bowl. Add prepared peaches and, if desired, ascorbic acid crystals (to prevent browning).

Combine 1/4 cup (50 mL) sugar and fruit pectin crystals; stir into fruit mixture. Let stand for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Gradually stir in remaining 3 cups (750 mL) sugar and continue stirring for 3 minutes. Pour into scalded jars. Cover with tight lids. Let stand at room temperature until set (may take up to 24 hours); then store in freezer. If used within 2 or 3 weeks, jam may be stored in refrigerator. Makes about 6 1/2 cups (1.6 L) jam.

Preparation Time: 25 minutes
Standing Time: 30 minutes **Setting Time: 24 hours**

STRAWBERRY SAUCED PEACHES WITH CRÈME FRAÎCHE

(FEATURED ON COVER) Succulent peaches afloat strawberry sauce and drizzled with crème fraîche make a pretty dessert for summertime entertaining.

1/4 cup	whipping cream	50 mL
1/4 cup	sour cream	50 mL
3 cups	frozen unsweetened strawberries, thawed (300 g pkg)	750 mL
1/4 cup	icing sugar	50 mL
1/4 tsp	almond extract	1 mL
6	Ontario Peaches	6
1 tbsp	lemon juice	15 mL

To prepare crème fraîche, mix together whipping cream and sour cream. Let stand at room temperature for 2 hours to thicken. Then cover and chill.

In blender or food processor, purée strawberries. Blend in icing sugar and almond extract. Chill.

Just before serving, peel and slice peaches; toss with lemon juice. Spoon about 1/4 cup (50 mL) strawberry sauce on each dessert plate; top with sliced peaches and drizzle with crème fraîche. Makes 6 servings.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes
Standing/Chilling Time: 3 hours

PEACH AND BLUEBERRY CREAM CRUNCH

A crispy, melt-in-your mouth cookie forms the base for this favourite combination of peaches, cream and blueberries. The cookies may be prepared ahead of time and stored in an airtight container.

Cookies:		
1/4 cup	butter, softened	50 mL
1/4 cup	packed brown sugar	50 mL
1 tbsp	corn syrup	15 mL
1/4 tsp	vanilla	1 mL
1/2 cup	all-purpose flour	125 mL
1/4 tsp	cinnamon	1 mL
Topping:		
6	Ontario Peaches	6
3/4 cup	fresh blueberries	175 mL
1 tbsp	lemon juice	15 mL
1/4 cup	granulated sugar	50 mL
1 cup	whipping cream	250 mL

Cookie: Cream together butter, brown sugar and corn syrup until light and fluffy; add vanilla. Blend in flour and cinnamon. Spoon 8 mounds onto two greased baking sheets, leaving room for cookies to spread. Flatten to 1/8-inch (0.5 cm) thickness; shape into circles. Bake at 375°F (190°C) for 8 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool on sheets for 1 minute, then remove to wire racks.

Topping: Just before serving, peel and slice peaches. Combine sliced peaches, blueberries, lemon juice and 2 tbsp (25 mL) granulated sugar. Whip cream with remaining 2 tbsp (25 mL) sugar until stiff peaks form. Place cookies on dessert plates; divide cream, then fruit on top of each cookie. Makes 8 servings.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes
Baking Time: 8 to 10 minutes

PREPARATION TIPS

Easy Peeling. Dip peaches in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds, then transfer to ice water. Slip skins off by hand.

Prevent Browning. Mix peeled or cut peaches with a little lemon juice or ascorbic acid crystals as soon as possible.

PEACH CHICKEN SALAD

A refreshing summer salad offering a medley of flavours and textures – sweet mellow peaches, crisp green beans and tender chicken morsels all tossed in a light yogourt dressing.

6	Ontario Peaches, unpeeled	6
4	medium chicken breasts, cooked, boned, skinned and diced	4
1 cup	young green beans, cut into 1-inch (2.5 cm) pieces	250 mL
3	green onions, chopped	3
2	medium carrots, julienned	2
1/2 cup	yogourt	125 mL
1/2 cup	mayonnaise	125 mL
1 tbsp	liquid honey	15 mL
1/2 tsp	ground ginger	2 mL
1 tbsp	lemon juice	15 mL
4	iceberg lettuce slices, 1/2-inch (1 cm) thick	4

Dice 2 peaches. Combine with chicken, green beans, green onions and carrots in large bowl.

For dressing, thoroughly mix yogourt, mayonnaise, honey and ginger. Combine with salad mixture. Cover and chill 1 to 3 hours.

Slice remaining 4 peaches; toss with lemon juice. Place lettuce slices on serving plates; mound salad mixture on top. Arrange peach slices on each serving. Makes 4 main course servings.

Preparation Time: 35 minutes
Chilling Time: 1 to 3 hours

SHERRIED PEACHES 'N CREAM

Ready at a moment's notice, this dessert takes advantage of the abundant supply of fresh Ontario peaches.

1/2 cup	maple syrup	125 mL
1/3 cup	sherry	75 mL
1/4 cup	granulated sugar	50 mL
8	Ontario Peaches	8
1 cup	sour cream OR whipping cream, lightly whipped	250 mL

In small saucepan, combine syrup, sherry and sugar; simmer, stirring to dissolve sugar. Remove from heat and cool.

Meanwhile, peel and slice peaches into glass bowl. Drizzle with syrup. If time allows, cover and chill for an hour before serving.

Serve peaches with sour or whipped cream. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Preparation Time: 10 minutes
Cooking Time: 2 to 3 minutes

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PEACH SCHNITZ PIE

This classic pie of sliced peaches in cream under crumble is a satisfying end to any meal.

1	unbaked deep dish pie shell (9-inch/23 cm)	1
2/3 cup	firmly packed brown sugar	150 mL
3 tbsp	all-purpose flour	50 mL
Pinch	salt	Pinch
2 tbsp	butter	25 mL
4 cups	thickly sliced, peeled Ontario Peaches	1 L
2 tsp	lemon juice	10 mL
1/4 cup	whipping cream	50 mL
1	egg yolk	1
1/2 tsp	cinnamon	2 mL

Chill pie shell while preparing filling.

In medium bowl combine sugar, flour and salt. Cut in butter to make slightly crumbly mixture. Spread 1/3 mixture over bottom of pie shell. Spoon in peaches evenly. Sprinkle with lemon juice.

Combine whipping cream and egg yolk; drizzle over fruit. Cover with remaining crumbs and dust with cinnamon.

Bake at 425°F (220°C) for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 375°F (190°C) and continue baking for about 30 to 35 minutes or until pastry is golden brown and peach filling bubbly. Cool to desired serving temperature. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Preparation Time: 30 minutes
Baking Time: 40 to 45 minutes

GLAZED PEACHES WITH WARM CUSTARD

This comforting dessert is sure to be a family favourite.

Custard:		
1 1/2 cups	milk	375 mL
2	egg yolks	2
3 tbsp	granulated sugar	40 mL
1 tbsp	cornstarch	15 mL
1/4 tsp	nutmeg	1 mL
1/8 tsp	salt	0.5 mL
1/2 tsp	vanilla	2 mL
Peaches:		
6	Ontario Peaches	6
1 tbsp	lemon juice	15 mL
2 tbsp	butter	25 mL
1/4 cup	packed brown sugar	50 mL
1/4 tsp	cinnamon	1 mL

Custard: In medium saucepan, scald milk. In bowl, whisk together egg yolks, granulated sugar, cornstarch, nutmeg and salt; gradually stir in milk. Pour mixture back into saucepan. Cook and stir over medium heat until thickened. Stir in vanilla.

Peaches: Peel and slice each peach into 8 wedges; toss with lemon juice. In large fryingpan, melt butter. Stir in brown sugar and cinnamon. Add peaches; sauté, stirring occasionally, until peaches are fork tender, about 5 minutes. Spoon into dessert dishes. Top with warm custard. Makes 6 servings.

Preparation Time: 20 minutes
Cooking Time: Custard: 3 minutes
Peaches: 5 minutes

FROSTY PEACH DESSERT

Entertain with this refreshing make-ahead dessert. The frosty peach filling is sandwiched between cinnamon shortbread crumbs and topped with fresh peaches.

Crust:		
1 cup	all-purpose flour	250 mL
1/3 cup	packed brown sugar	75 mL
1/4 tsp	cinnamon	1 mL
1/2 cup	butter, melted	125 mL
Filling:		
10	Ontario Peaches	10
1 cup	granulated sugar	250 mL
2	egg whites, at room temperature	2
2 tbsp	lemon juice	25 mL
1	carton (250 mL) whipping cream, whipped	1

Crust: Mix flour, brown sugar, cinnamon and melted butter in shallow pan. Bake at 350°F (180°C) for 20 minutes; stir 2 or 3 times to keep mixture crumbly; cool. Reserve 1 cup (250 mL) for topping and spread remaining in bottom of 9-inch (23 cm) springform pan or 13 × 9-inch (33 × 23 cm) rectangular pan.

Filling: Peel and mash 4 peaches in large deep bowl. Add sugar, egg whites, and lemon juice. Beat on medium speed until foamy; then at medium-high speed until thickened and volume has doubled (about 10 minutes). Fold in whipped cream. Spread filling evenly over crumb mixture. Sprinkle reserved crumbs on top. Cover and freeze for minimum of 6 hours.

Just before serving, let stand at room temperature 10 minutes. Slice remaining peaches and arrange on each serving. Makes 10 to 12 servings.

Preparation Time: 35 minutes
(includes 20 minutes baking time)
Freezing Time: 6 hours

QUICK AND EASY IDEAS FOR PEACHES

Peachy Waffle Brunch
Top cooked waffles with peeled, sliced Ontario Peaches; drizzle with maple syrup. If desired, add a dollop of sour cream and sprinkle with cinnamon.

Peach Tossed Salad
Add 1 peeled puréed Ontario Peach to a basic vinaigrette dressing; toss with lettuce, fresh basil and sliced unpeeled peaches.

Peach Delight Stir-Fry
Add peeled and sliced Ontario Peaches to a ham or chicken stir-fry near the end of the cooking time. Heat through and serve.

Peachy Ham 'N Cheese
Make an open face ham and Swiss cheese sandwich. Top with peeled and sliced Ontario Peaches. Combine mayonnaise with a little chili sauce and mustard; drizzle over peaches.

Fresh Peach Tarts
Spoon sliced unpeeled Ontario Peaches into baked tart shells. Melt apricot jam over medium heat and thin with a little lemon juice; spoon over peaches. Chill. Serve with whipped cream, if desired.

Peaches with Yogourt Snow
Prepare meringue with one egg white and 2 tbsp (25 mL) brown sugar. Fold into 1 small container (175 g) of peach or raspberry yogourt. Spoon over peeled and sliced Ontario Peaches.

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Ontario, there's no taste like home.

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